

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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12 TIPS FOR A SAFE HOLIDAY FEAST

As Christmas approaches, keep in mind that more than one in ten of us cook Christmas dinner for a large crowd. Catering safely for a large gathering can be a challenge in a domestic kitchen; refrigerators and ovens never seem big enough. When there is so much food, some is often served warm when it should be chilled or too cool when it should be piping hot. These festive times that are for giving and sharing should not include sharing foodborne illness with family and friends. Follow these 12 tips to help reduce your chances of “sharing” a foodborne illness this Christmas:

1. **Wash your hands frequently**-especially before preparing food, after touching raw food, coughing, sneezing, or touching pets.
2. **Frozen poultry must always be thawed thoroughly before cooking**-A 15 pound turkey will take 24-48 hours to thaw in the refrigerator; allow over two days for a 25 pound turkey to thaw.
3. **Wash your bird carefully**-washing poultry can splash harmful bacteria (already on the bird) around the kitchen leading to the cross contamination of other foods. Thoroughly clean and sanitize sinks, countertops, and any other areas exposed to splashing.
4. **Use separate chopping boards and utensils**- or wash them thoroughly to avoid cross contamination between raw meat and any cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
5. **Cook your stuffing separately**- but if you feel you must stuff the bird, make sure you take the stuffing weight into account when calculating the cooking time.
6. **Poultry, sausages, chopped and minced meat must always be cooked thoroughly**-check to make sure there are no pink bits in the middle, that the juices run clear, and that they are piping hot throughout.
7. **Don't use raw eggs in food that will not be cooked**- foods such as chocolate mousse and homemade mayonnaise are known to contain raw eggs as an ingredient. Use pasteurized eggs instead.

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8. **Always serve piping hot food and as soon as it is ready.**
9. **Don't leave leftovers lying around**-make sure hot foods cool quickly before placing them in the refrigerator. To speed cooling, divide into smaller portions or place in shallow containers.
10. **Avoid re-heating food more than once**-if you re-heat leftovers make sure they're hot throughout. Do not eat leftover meat that has been refrigerated for longer than four days or left over stuffing or gravy refrigerated for longer than two days.
11. **Give your refrigerator and freezer a good cleaning**-before you stock up for the holidays. Make more space by using up existing items such as sodas and sauces already stored in the refrigerator.
12. **Don't overstock your refrigerator or freezer**-this makes it difficult to maintain the right temperature. Food should be stored separately in covered containers and properly wrapped. Always store cooked food and ready-to-eat food above raw food like fish, poultry and meat, which should be in covered containers on the bottom shelf to prevent them from dripping onto other foods.

For more information on this topic and similar topics, contact the San Bernardino County, Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Services at (909) 884-4056 or visit our website at www.sbcounty.gov/dehs.

Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season!